

Jobs Versus Birds

Position One: Challenge the Endangered Species Act

As the owner of a small retail business in Oregon, you are very aware of how the health of other industries affects your business. You recently learned that because of the protection of the northern spotted owl by the Endangered Species Act, thirty thousand logging jobs and twenty thousand jobs in related industries could be lost. One of the jobs that might be lost is yours, since your business is frequented by many families of loggers. You have to decide if you are going to financially support an attempt to legally challenge the Endangered Species Act.

This is a difficult issue because you also have been concerned about environmental issues. You have been backpacking in logging areas and have seen the destruction, waste, and erosion caused by logging. You are concerned about the health of the environment and believe that our society is in danger because of environmental destruction.

You decide, however, that the probable loss of fifty thousand jobs is too great a price to pay to save one species of owl. These jobs are supporting families with children, supporting elderly people, and paying for medical services. You don't think you can justify sacrificing livelihoods for the sake of an owl.

Defend your position.

Position Two: Support the Endangered Species Act

As the owner of a small retail business in Oregon, you are very aware of how the health of other industries affects your business. You recently learned that because of the protection of the northern spotted owl by the Endangered Species Act, thirty thousand logging jobs and twenty thousand jobs in related industries could be lost. One of the jobs that might be lost is yours, since your business is frequented by many families of loggers. You have to decide if you are going to financially support an attempt to legally challenge the Endangered Species Act.

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You decide that despite the probable negative impact on your business, you have a moral obligation to support the process of saving the owl. While it would be difficult to lose a job now, the logging boom is going to be over sometime in the next twenty years anyway when the old growth forests are gone. You think that we may as well get ready now for a post-logging world. We cannot predict the future very well and we might find other, more environmentally harmonious ways of living. For example, the bark of the yew tree, which grows in these forests, has been found effective in treating some types of cancer. There may be other valuable species of plants and animals that we don't know about yet.

Defend your position.